

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1876

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

COMNAVBASE GTMO BAY CUBA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3172

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS JM

SUBJ: JAMAICAN STATE OF EMERGENCY: SIX WEEKS LATER

REF: KINGSTON 2544

1. STATE OF EMERGENCY (SOE) INITIALLY DECLARED JUNE 19 FOR 30 DAYS AND SUBSEQUENTLY EXTENDED ADDITIONAL 100 DAYS BY PARLIAMENTARY ACTION. FURTHER EXTENSIONS CAN BE EXPECTED -- PROBABLY AT LEAST UNTIL SOMETIME EARLY NEXT YEAR. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS RELEASES ISSUED BY THE JAMAICAN SECURITY FORCES APPROXIMATELY 2000 PERSONS HAVE BEEN PICKED UP AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER SINCE JUNE 19. OF THESE, ONLY 115 DETAINED UNDER EMERGENCY REGULATIONS WHICH WENT INTO EFFECT WITH DECLARATION OF SOE. REGULATIONS ESSENTIALLY PROVIDE FOR SUSPENSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND INDEFINITE DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OF THOSE DETAINED. HOWEVER, SUCH DETAINEES CANNOT BE HELD BEYOND TERMINATION OF SOE WITHOUT FILING OF FORMAL CHARGES UNDER EXISTING LAW, E.G., SUPPRESSION OF CRIMES ACT. JLP SENATOR PEARNEL CHARLES IS AMONG THOSE HELD WITHOUT FORMAL CHARGE UNDER EMERGENCY REGULATIONS (GOJ AT ONE POINT FILED FORMAL CHARGES OF QUOTE INCITEMENT TO COMMIT A BREACH OF PEACE CONFIDENTIAL

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END QUOTE BUT DROPPED THEM IN A COURTROOM CONFRONTATION). OF THE APPROXIMATELY 1900 OTHERS PICKED UP AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER UNDER SUPPRESSION OF CRIMES ACT AND OTHER LEGISLATION (INCLUDING CURFEW OR OTHER LESSOR VIOLATIONS). IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW

MANY REMAIN UNDER DETENTION. MOST APPEAR HAVE BEEN HELD ONLY TEMPORARILY FOR QUESTIONING AND THEN RELEASED.

2. OF THOSE DETAINED UNDER EMERGENCY REGULATIONS PARNEL CHARLES (DEPUTY LEADER OF OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOR PARTY) IS ONLY MAJOR POLITICAL LEADER. THREE LESSER JLP AND ONE PNP CANDIDATES ARE SIMILARLY DETAINED TOGETHER WITH ABOUT ELEVEN OTHER LESSER JLP FIGURES. REMAINDER OF DETAINEES ARE FOR THE MOST PART A MISCELLANEY OF PNP AND JLP THUGS. ALTHOUGH EXACT RATION OF PARTY AFFILIATION NOT CERTAIN IT IS EVIDENT THAT A SIGNIFICANT MAJORITY OF DETAINEES ARE AFFILIATED WITH JLP. IT ALSO IS CLEAR MANY KEY GUNMEN AND GANG LEADERS FROM BOTH SIDES REMAIN AT LARGE OWING TO POLITICAL PROTECTION. THE MOST OBVIOUS ABSENTEE FROM THE DETENTION CENTER IS GOVERNMENT HOUSING MINISTER ANTHONY SPAULDING. CONDITIONS AT THEUP PARK CAMP DETENTION CENTER ARE SPARTAN BUT ADEQUATE. THERE HAVE BEEN FEW COMPLAINTS ON THIS POINT. DETAINEES HAVE BEEN ALLOWED VISITORS (FAMILY AND LAWYERS) AND PHONE CALLS ON A JUSTIFIABLE BASIS (E.G. EMBOFF RECEIVED A VISITOR VISA REQUEST FOR DEPENDENTS FROM DEPUTY JLP LEADER PARNEL CHARLES).

3. ALTHOUGH ANY CRIME STATISTICS ARE SUSPECT, AS ARE STATEMENTS OF GOJ OFFICIALS ON THOSE STATISTICS (MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY KEBLE MUNN CLAIMS VIOLENT CRIME CUT BY HALF SINCE JUNE 19), THERE HAS BEEN REDUCTION ALL CATEGORIES OF VIOLENT CRIME. MANY POLITICAL GUNMEN AND OTHER CRIMINAL ELEMENTS STILL AT LARGE CLEARLY ARE LAYING LOW -- AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. JLP LEADERSHIP HAS EXERCISED TIGHT CONTROL OVER ITS GUNMEN (INCLUDED IN PARTICULAR THOSE OF PARNEL CHARLES) BUT IS KEEPING IT'S POWDER DRY. IT ALSO IS OF SIGNIFICANCE THAT, MORE THAN 42 DAYS AFTER DECLARATION OF SOE, ONLY ABOUT 70 FIREARMS, 1100 ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION, AND A MISCELLANEY OF EXPLOSIVES AND FIRE BOMBS HAVE BEEN SEIZED BY SECURITY FORCES. MOST SEIZED WEAPONS ARE HOME MADE SHOT GUNS AND ANTIQUATED PISTOLS. FEW IF ANY SOPHISTICATED OR MODERN WEAPONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN.

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4. GENERAL PUBLIC'S REACTION TO SOE IS SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT. THERE IS ACCEPTANCE THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME REDUCTION IN CRIME AND MOST JAMAICANS APPEAR TO WELCOME SOE FOR THAT REASON ALONE. ON OTHER HAND THERE ALSO IS GENERAL FEELING IMPLEMENTATION HAS BEEN SOMETHING LESS THAN APOLITICAL, E.G., GOJ'S PROTESTATIONS OF SOE'S NON POLITICAL ENFORCEMENT WILL BE ACCEPTED ONLY WHEN SPAULDING SHARES DETENTION WITH PARNEL CHARLES.

5. JLP LEADERSHIP CONSIDERS WHOLE EXERCISE AS AN EFFORT TO EMASCULATE THE OPPOSITION AND THUS ASSURE A RETURN TO OFFICE OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT AT NEXT ELECTION. ALTHOUGH NO KEY JLP FIGURES (OTHER THAN PARNEL CHARLES) HAVE BEEN DETAINED, THREAT OF DETENTION IS SUFFICIENTLY SERIOUS JLP CANDIDATES ARE RELUCTANT

TO CONDUCT NORMAL FREE WHEELING ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THEY ASSUME GOJ MAY DETAIN ON SELECTIVE BASIS WITH LITTLE OR NO PROVOCATION JLP CANDIDATES WHO REPRESENT A MAJOR ELECTORAL THREAT. JLP LEADER SEAGA'S MOOD SWINGS FROM HIGH TO LOW AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND. TWO WEEKS AGO HE TOLD AMBASSADOR JOP COULD NOT WIN AN ALECTION HELD UNDER THE SOE AND MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO CONTEST SUCH AN ELECTION. MORE RECENTLY, ON JULY 29, FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN SWING AROUND THE ISLAND AND A PARTY LEADERSHIP MEETING ON JULY 25, SEAGA HAS BEEN MORE OPTIMISTIC AND TOLD EMBOFF JLP MIGHT WIN A QUOTE FAIR END QUOTE ELECTION EVEN WITH THE SOE. HIS PREOCCUPATION NOW IS THAT PRIME MINISTER MANLEY WILL STILL USE THE SOE OR SOME OTHER DEVICE TO DENY HIM THAT OPPORTUNITY.

6. SEAGA IS ALSO CONVICTED THE CUBANS ARE ADVISING MANLEY ON HOW BEST TO USE THE SOE TO THE PNP'S ADVANTAGE. HE TOLD AN EMBOFF JULY 29 THAT HE HAD HEARD FROM DISAFFECTED SENIOR PNP OFFICIALS THAT CUBANS ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PNP AND THAT MANUEL PINEIRO LASADA (FORMER DGI CHIEF AND CURRENT HEAD OF THE AMERICAN DEPARTMENT OF THE CUBAN COMMUNIST PARTY) WOULD VISIT JAMAICA IN EARLY AUGUST TO CONSULT WITH PNP LEADERS ON SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS.

7. WITH THE SOE EXTENDED TO 130 DAYS OR UNTIL LATE OCTOBER, SEAGA NOW BELIEVES THE ELECTION WILL NOT BE BEFORE NOVEMBER, WHEN NEW CONSTITUENCIES CAN BE CREATED AND BOUNDARIES CHANGED. MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY KEBLE MUNN IS IN CHARGE OF THE CONSTITUENCY CHANGES FOR THE PNP AND HAS BEGUN A CONFIDENTIAL

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SERIES OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SITTING PNP MPS ON HOW THEY SHOULD BE MADE.

8. ASIDE FROM THE POLITICAL ISSUES ADDRESSED ABOVE AND IN SEPARATE MESSAGES, A MAJOR QUESTION NOW IS HOW LONG THE SECURITY FORCES CAN EFFECTIVELY CARRY OUT THEIR MISSION UNDER THE SOE. OVER ONE THIRD OF JAMAICAN DEFENSE FORCE INVOLVED IS RESERVE (3RD BATTALION). IN NEAR FUTURE IT PROBABLY WILL BE RELEASED FROM FULL TIME SERVICE. BEYOND THIS CONSIDERATION AL SECURITY FORCES PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN WORKING 12 AND MORE HOURS A DAY SIX AND SEVEN DAYS A WEEK FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. DATT SOURCES WITHIN JAMAICA DEFENSE FORCE INDICATE POLICE AND ARMY MORALE LOW OWING FOREGOING CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THEIR INABILITY TO GO AFTER AND DETAIN THE MANY GUNMEN AND GANG LEADERS STILL AT LARGE AND PROTECTED BY VARIOUS PNP AND GOJ LEADERS. POLICE MORAL ESPECIALLY LOW OWING WEAK AND INCREASINGLY POLITICIZED (PRO-PNP) LEADERSHIP.

9. EVEN WITH ALL RESERVES ON DUTY AND ABOVE HEAVY OVERTIME COMMITMENT, SITUATION IS BARELY BEING CONTAINED -- AND THEN IN PART BECAUSE OF POLITICAL DECISIONS WITHIN BOTH

JOP AND PNP LEADERSHIP TO HAVE THEIR RESPECTIVE GANGS LAY
LOW FOR THE TIME BEING. SHOUD THIS SITUATION CHANGE, AND
ESPECIALLY IF THERE IS SIMULTANEOUS VIOLENCE AT POINTS ON
THE ISLAND OTHER THAN KINGSTON, SITUATION COULD QUICKLY PASS
BEYOND CONTROL OF THE SECURITY FORCES.
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